

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4983

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 1506

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PERP, BU, UR

SUBJECT: NON-APPEARANCES AT KULAKOV'S BURIAL: THE BULGARIAN VIEW

REFS: A) MOSCOW 17037, B) STATE 186884

1. WE READ REFTELS WITH INTEREST, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE WERE SOMEWHAT SURPRISED BY THE RESTRAINED MEDIA TREATMENT OF KULAKOV'S DEATH AND FUNERAL. WE REALIZE THAT TRYING TO TAKE MOSCOW'S TEMPERATURE FROM SOFIA REQUIRES A LONG THERMOMETER; NEVERTHELESS WE OFFER SOME OBSERVATIONS.

2. THE BULGARIAN PRESS GAVE ONLY ROUTINE REPORTING TO KULAKOV'S DEATH -- ONLY TWO ARTICLES APPEARED, ONE ANNOUNCING THE DEMISE, THE OTHER DESCRIBING THE FUNERAL. EVEN KELDYSH RATED A PRESS ITEM DETAILING HIS CREDENTIALS AND

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LISTING HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS. IN ADDITION, THERE WAS NO ANNOUNCEMENT OF A BULGARIAN DELEGATION ATTENDING KULAKOV'S FUNERAL. (COMMENT: OUR DAO WAS TOLD BY A BULGARIAN THAT A DELEGATION DID ATTEND THE FUNERAL. HOWEVER, WHEN ASKED WHO, THE REPLY WAS THE AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW. ONE PHOTO DID SHOW SOVIET MILITARY ATTACHE TO SOFIA, COLONEL VALERI TSANAGOV, KULAKOV'S SON-IN-LAW, STANDING BEHIND KULAKOV'S CASKET. END

COMMENT)

3. COMPARING THE BULGARIAN OFFICIAL AND MEDIA REACTION TO THE DEATHS OF GRECHKO AND KULAKOV, WE WERE STRUCK BY SOME SIGNIFICANT DISSIMILARITIES.

-- FIRST, ON THE OCCASION OF GRECHKO'S DEATH, PARTY LEADER TODOR ZHIVKOV AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CHAIRMAN STANKO TODOROV SENT OFFICIAL LETTER OF CONDOLENCE (PROMINENTLY PUBLISHED IN THE BULGARIAN PRESS) TO BREZHNEV, KOSYGIN, AND PODGORNYY. NO SUCH LETTER APPEARED WHEN KULAKOV DIED.

-- SECOND, A HIGH-LEVEL "PARTY-GOVERNMENT" DELEGATION, HEADED BY CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE, DOBRI DZHUROV, ATTENDED GRECHKO'S FUNERAL, WHILE NO DELEGATION WAS PRESENT FOR KULAKOV'S.

4. IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO RATIONALIZE THE DZHUROV DELEGATION IN 1976 BY CLAIMING THAT DZHUROV WENT TO MOSCOW BECAUSE OF GRECHKO'S MILITARY POSITION, BUT IT IS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO ACCOUNT FOR THE BULGARIAN LEADERSHIP'S FAILURE TO SEND A LETTER OF CONDOLENCE TO MOSCOW. OUR READING HERE IS THAT THE BULGARIANS WERE AWARE THAT KULAKOV'S STAR HAD FALLEN AND ACTED ACCORDINGLY.
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